

Building Brotherhood for Combat

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Leaders should visibly love their people more than their positions—and prove their love with their actions.

—President Theodore Roosevelt

Love came to us unbidden on the battlefields, as it does on every battlefield in every war man has ever fought. We discovered in that depressing, hellish place, where death was our constant companion, that we loved each other. We killed for each other; we died for each other; and we wept for each other. And in time we came to love each other as brothers.

—Lieutenant General Harold Moore and Joseph Galloway, *We Were Soldiers Once . . . and Young*

I HAVE HEARD many leaders talk about how they love their soldiers, love the Army, and love their country, and I have heard stories of how the leaders' soldiers loved them. Do some leaders really love their soldiers and the Army? Why would soldiers love their leaders? How is love related to leadership?

Do these leaders really mean love? Is this love the same as the way in which they love their parents, their siblings, their spouse, their children, or their dogs? How is serving in the Army related to these relationships? Are they similar? Americans seem to accept that it is OK to love their country, but is it appropriate to love an organization and its personnel? Is it appropriate for them to love their leader? Do we really mean love?

This article will examine the process of leadership as it relates to love. It will first discuss how an Army unit is similar to a family and then discuss how leadership relates to love on individual, group, and organizational levels. The focus will be on scientific research of love as it relates to leadership and how love relates to leadership in combat.

A Military Unit as a Family

One second he was paralyzed with fear and pain and the next . . . he had stopped caring about himself. He would think about this a lot later, and the best he could explain it was, his own life no longer mattered. All that did matter were his buddies, his brothers, that they not get hurt, that they not get killed. These men around him, some of whom he had only known for months, were more important to him than life itself. . . . He had to keep fighting because the other guys needed him.

—Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down*

We hear a lot about how soldiers become a band of brothers when they share the intensity of combat. Are they truly as close as brothers? Is a family a good model for a combat unit? Is this an effective way to fight in combat? If so, how does one develop such a close relationship in a military unit?

Anyone who has been in combat or experienced tough, challenging training in peacetime understands how close soldiers can become. It seems that relationships among soldiers can approach the same kinds of relationships that they feel for parents, children, siblings, or spouses. In this context, perhaps one might feel more comfortable using the word love when considering a unit as a family rather than in a romantic sense. Notice that military language is filled with terms like “parent unit,” “platoon daddy,” and “sister unit” and that leaders sometimes use the word “son” when addressing young male soldiers.

It seems that military traditions, daily training, and deployments encourage soldiers to think of their unit as an extended family, especially if the leaders foster this environment. It appears that the traditional military culture suggests that this is an effective way to build relationships and to train for combat. Leaders foster this environment by personally relating to soldiers and developing teams through tough, realistic, and challenging training, thus developing in a unit

a sense of family.

Given the importance of unit cohesion and a sense of brotherhood in combat, leaders should review personnel policies to try to establish as much stability as possible within their units. Yes, leaders have to balance unit readiness with the need for soldier development, but currently there seems to be quite a bit of turbulence in the Army personnel system. How close would a family be if its members changed every few months or years? Personnel stability may be less cost efficient, but commanders should consider the effectiveness that could be gained by allowing subordinate leaders time to shape the organizational climate and build small-group cohesion. Leaders need time to build the close personal relationships with soldiers and their families that lead to an effective fighting force. Granted, this is a challenge in a limited resource environment, but leaders should always look for ways to ensure they are building teams rather than just moving individuals through an organization. The resulting unit cohesion and the stability for fami-

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lies might justify some inefficiency. Many spouses would love to establish roots and hold the same job for more than 2 or 3 years, and this would further contribute to the cohesion between units and their families.

Consider the earliest forms of human affiliation and military history, and note the many examples of extended families, clans, and tribes that formed the core of effective fighting forces. Modern examples might include the extended sense of family generated by the regimental system in highly cohesive military organizations. If the mission is to fight and win the nation's wars, soldiers and their leaders must be committed to each other beyond just a day-to-day working relationship. They need the close support of their brothers and families to fight, kill, and die while serving their nation and each other.

Can combat leaders actually love their soldiers?

Although I do not consider myself particularly sentimental, I get a little misty when "God Bless America" plays, even though I have heard it many times following the horrific attacks of 11 September 2001. I love this country, I love the Army that defends it, and I love the soldiers who protect it. I even love many of the bosses I've had over the years. I might not have openly shown affection for my first sergeant, executive officer, or platoon sergeant, but I think they were some of the finest men I have ever met. I am proud to have served with them.

The Science of Love and Leadership

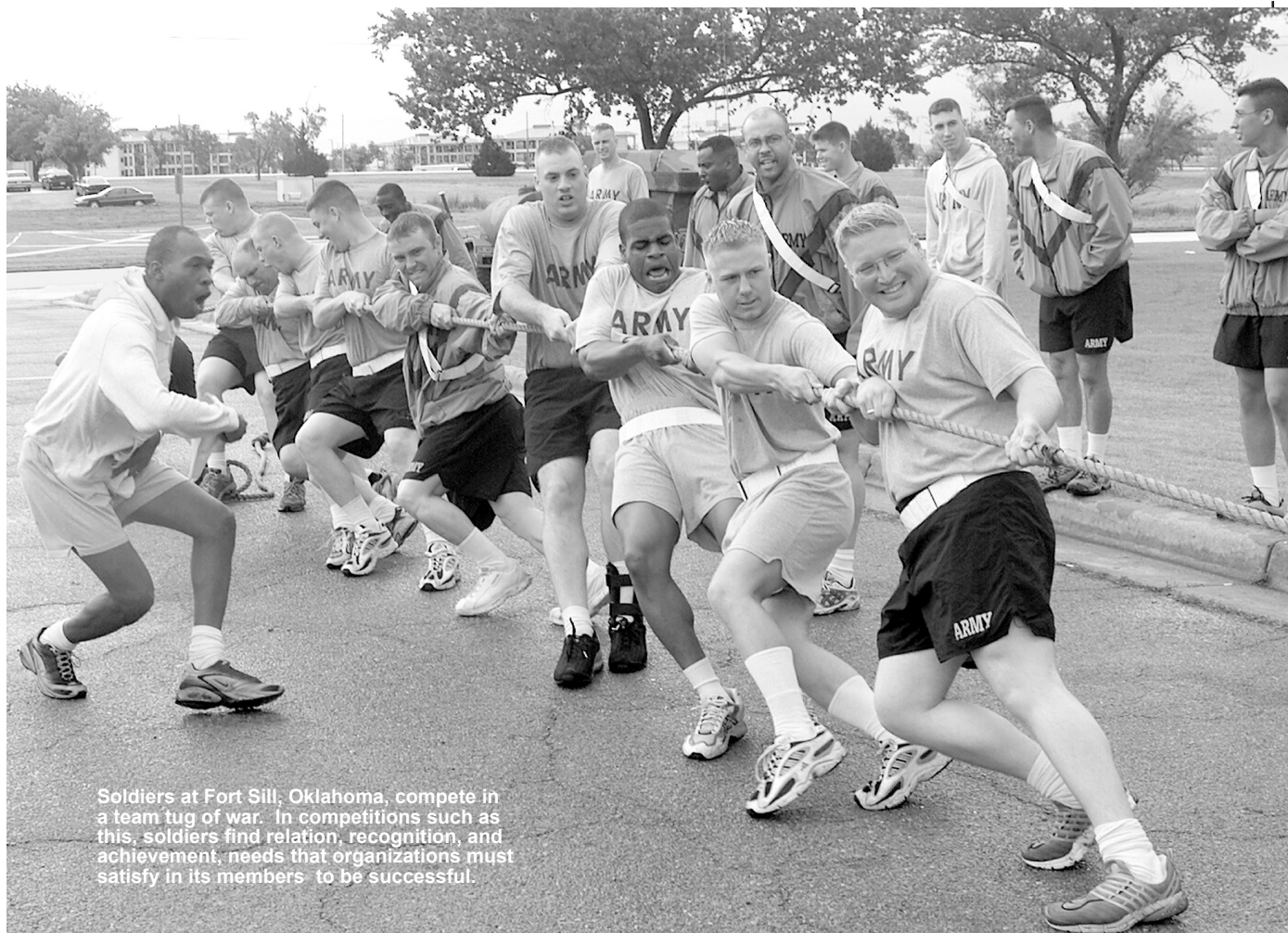
Intimacy rises from translating personal and corporate values into daily work practices, from searching for knowledge and wisdom and justice. Above all, intimacy rises from, and gives rise to, strong relationships. Intimacy is one way of describing the relationship we all desire with work.

—Max DePree, *Leadership is an Art*

The word "love" is used many ways, but the English language is somewhat restrictive when it comes to describing feelings. In contrast, Greek distinguishes several forms of the word "love"—eros, passionate love; mania, possessive love; pragma, logical love; agape, selfless love; storge, friendship love; and ludus, game-playing love.¹

How does science differentiate love from like and other emotions? There is some debate among scientists regarding the nature of emotions. Many scientists argue that emotions are not differentiated—that people do not feel them differently—but that feelings are simply physiological arousals interpreted according to social cues in the environment. In other words, when there is a physiological response, one searches his environment for the stimulus and interprets it according to the social setting.²

According to this view, when observing the efforts of a soldier who has just completed a grenade assault course with an outstanding score or a tank platoon that fires a perfect score on tank table XII, or watch an entire battalion provide disaster relief, one interprets his emotions according to the available environmental cues. A leader might feel a mixture of pride, respect, and admiration for these accomplishments. If, over time, he sees all the great things that soldiers, units, and the Army do to serve the nation and understands veterans' past sacrifices, it is easy to see how one might love soldiers, the Army, and the country. Some people may interpret and express their emotions this way, while others may not; it depends on how they interpret the social cues. I love to watch soldiers and units get the job done and feel an immense wave of gratitude and love for the sacrifice my grandfathers' and father's generations have



Soldiers at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, compete in a team tug of war. In competitions such as this, soldiers find relation, recognition, and achievement, needs that organizations must satisfy in its members to be successful.

It is generally accepted that people need affiliation—to be respected, liked, and loved by others. Of course, the degree may vary depending on personality and childhood experiences, but generally, by joining the Army, most people appear to satisfy these needs. If this is part of why soldiers join the Army, it seems that leaders have a responsibility to create an environment where soldiers can earn respect, find friendship, and develop a passion for their profession.

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It is generally accepted that people need affiliation—to be respected, liked, and loved by others.³ Of course, the degree may vary depending on personality and childhood experiences, but generally, by joining the Army, most people appear to satisfy these needs.⁴ If this is part of why soldiers join the Army, it seems that leaders have a responsibility to create an environment where soldiers can earn respect, find friendship, and develop a passion for their profession. Does this passion translate into love for the Army? Some of the basic principles of attraction include simple association with others, reinforcement, and positive social exchange for accomplishments. All these are present within the Army. Leaders have ample opportunity, or should make the time, to associate with their soldiers and reward them through recognition, praise, and tangible rewards when they have done their job well.⁵

Researchers have also determined that people are attracted to individuals who exhibit trustworthiness, sincerity, honesty, loyalty, truthfulness, and depend-

ability.⁶ These are some of the traits and values that leaders and soldiers display. People are also attracted to others who exhibit warmth and competence.⁷ Competence is certainly demanded from leaders and soldiers, and many soldiers and leaders are warm and likable individuals. Once again, it seems that the Army fosters and attracts the kind of people who are difficult not to like and who can develop strong affection for others.

Researchers have also determined that people are generally attracted to others who are somewhat similar to themselves.⁸ This is also the case in the Army, or at least it can be if leaders take the time to understand both the diversity in their organization and the ways in which most people are similar. Most soldiers join the Army to serve their nation, to belong to a winning team, to better themselves, or to grow as individuals. If leaders take time to acknowledge these needs and to foster them through personal relationships within units, they will enhance the quality of the relationships and the units' effectiveness and cohesion.

How does this attraction and affection become love? Scientists have established that love is distinct from liking. Love is described as an attitude toward another person that involves attachment, caring, trust, and self-disclosure, while liking has more to do with someone's being intelligent and well-adjusted, and displaying good judgment. Liking is combining the feelings of affection and respect.⁹

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So, it seems that liking soldiers, units, and the Army may be a good start—it sounds OK to have affection and respect for soldiers and them for you. But what about love? Do soldiers need more of the attachment, care, and trust that are described as love to fight in combat, or is liking enough? Isn't being attached to one's soldiers, caring for them, and earning their trust all part of effective leadership?

Robert J. Sternberg describes another theory of love as the "Triangular Theory of Love."¹⁰ According to his model, the three components of love include intimacy, passion, and commitment. Applying his model to the Army, are leaders intimate with their soldiers, passionate about the mission, and committed to their soldiers and the Army? Of course, there is a limit to how intimate leaders should be with their soldiers, but still, leaders must know the characters of those they lead. Leaders express passion through hard work, dedication, and devotion to soldiers and their missions. In fact, leaders should be committed to their soldiers, their missions, and the Army.

Richard Daft, author of *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, notes that organizations have traditionally used fear to motivate people and that fear can motivate people under certain circumstances, within certain limits.¹¹ Using fear to motivate inhibits contributions, enthusiasm, and risk-taking. People do not want to make mistakes, so they stay within approved limits. In contrast, leading with love uses more positive forces such as caring, listening, and developing personal relationships with followers. In this environment, followers can grow and learn, and will take

more risks. The organization as a whole can greatly benefit from its members' willing and enthusiastic contributions.

Daft cites Jan Carlson, president and chief executive officer of Scandinavian Airlines Systems Group: "In my experience, there are two great motivators in life. One is fear. The other is love. You can manage an organization by fear, but if you do you will ensure that people don't perform up to their real capabilities. A person who is afraid doesn't dare perform to the limits of his or her capabilities. . . . But if you manage by love—that is, if you show them respect and trust . . . in that kind of atmosphere, they dare to take risks."¹² Daft contends that leading with love, by showing respect and trust, not only generates improved performance but also makes people feel more connected to the organization and feel better about their lives. Relying on fear to lead may reduce followers' performance, squash their enthusiasm, and limit the organization's productivity.

According to Daft, one problem with leading with love in organizations is that many leaders do not feel comfortable employing this type of leadership style and do not want to show any sign of weakness. This is particularly applicable to the Army because of the rough and tough image leaders believe they must present to be mentally and physically ready for combat and to give confidence to soldiers and the public. Daft cites former President Ronald Reagan as a leader who was tough but led with love through displaying open affection for his wife and demonstrating passion and emotion during a visit to Normandy and during funeral services for the *Challenger* astronauts.

Daft points out that there are many forms of what we term love and that there is certainly an appropriate way to express love as a leader. Consider the power that love can have over people. If soldiers know that leaders truly care for them, love their unit, love the Army, and love America, they are more likely to respect and trust their leaders, thus developing their own passion for the unit, the Army, and the nation. The results of this kind of leadership are soldiers and leaders who are fiercely devoted to their missions; leaders who will not employ soldiers carelessly to accomplish tasks; and followers who are devoted to their leaders, their fellow soldiers, the Army, and their mission because they understand that they are part of something bigger than themselves.

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with them (know), and are active participants in helping their followers develop and achieve the organization's goals (do).¹³

Leadership and Love in Combat

... the men marched believing they were behind McClellan. He was the only general Chamberlain had ever seen who was truly loved. The Rebs loved Lee, no doubt of that. And we loved Mac. Chamberlain thought: two things an officer must do, to lead men. This from old Ames, who never cared about love: You must care for your men's welfare. You must show personal courage.

—Michael Shaara, *The Killer Angels*

In combat, there are three primary factors that determine how a soldier will respond under duress. They can be described using the acronym TLC for training, leadership, and cohesion. When soldiers are under the stress of combat, TLC determines how they will react.

Training. In an effective combat unit, training, especially common skills tasks and battle drills training, should dictate a soldier's initial response to the stress and strains of combat. Training may seem as if it has little to do with love, but if a leader really loves soldiers, he will train them to be ready when they face combat. This is perhaps the greatest evidence that a leader genuinely cares for soldiers—he trains them as a team to do their jobs. Marksmanship, common skills tasks, and battle drills allow soldiers to survive and give leaders time to make decisions that will help the unit accomplish its mission. Soldiers and small units must know how to survive initial contact with the enemy, survive casualties, and survive prolonged combat. First aid, combat lifesaver, and medical evacuation training are key to taking care of soldiers and getting the job done. Physical fitness, field craft, and the cohesion and personal relationships developed during training will help soldiers endure the prolonged stress of combat.

Leadership. Soldiers naturally look to their leaders for direction and strength. In combat, this is even more the case. Soldiers must know their leader is competent, cares about the mission, and cares about them. The leader also has to know how to fight the enemy, how to keep his poise, and how to make effective and timely decisions. Effective common task training and battle drills give the leader time to assess the situation, analyze it, and formulate a plan based on experience and training. If the situation is dire and time is minimal, “follow me!” may be the appropriate response. If a leader has not shown he genuinely cares about the mission and soldiers, he may find that during combat few will follow, and the mission and unit will be in jeopardy.

Cohesion. W.D. Henderson, author of *Cohesion*:

The Human Element in Combat, observes: “The nature of modern war indicates that small-unit cohesion is the only force capable of causing soldiers to expose themselves consistently to enemy fire in pursuit of an army's goals.”¹⁴ In combat, soldiers should first respond to their training and look to their leaders for guidance, but their fellow soldiers' reaction and needs can powerfully influence their actions. These are the external cues that can rouse a soldier to act and emerge from intense fear and self-preservation. Junior leaders have a big influence on soldiers on the battlefield, but there will be times when a sol-

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dier only has contact with his buddy next to him. At these moments, they must trust each other and count on one another to do their jobs as part of the team. Most soldiers have some sense of the importance of cohesion, how to recognize it, and how to build it in units, but they should consider it the top priority. Effective training, good leadership, and building unit cohesion all go together.

Cohesion is similar to developing a sense of family in a unit. Effective training, arduous deployments, and personal leadership all contribute to building cohesion. Brotherhood can also be fostered through—

- Taking care of soldiers from the beginning with an effective sponsorship program that swiftly integrates them into the team.
- Opening communication with an effective, two-way counseling program that helps soldiers and units establish and reach individual and collective goals.
- Ensuring that information gets to soldiers and that soldiers' concerns are addressed through effective communication throughout the chain of command.
- Empowering junior leaders and soldiers to make decisions and take ownership of the unit.
- Establishing a fair system of rewards, punishment, and evaluation that reinforces unit values and standards.
- Generating friendly, healthy competition within

the unit and with other units that recognizes that, in the end, they all go to war together.

- Upholding and establishing unit traditions that foster patriotism and pride in the nation and the unit, its history, its heroes, and its symbols.

- Conducting unit social events that include families as much as possible.

Unit cohesion is not just about getting along. It is more a sense that everyone on the team understands his role, is competent, and is confident that the rest of the team will do its part. The unit can accomplish its mission as a cohesive force—each soldier knows his role and does his part.

Love the Army; Love the Nation

Joshua Chamberlain, listening, thought of the sound of Butterfield's Lullaby coming out of the dark, through a tent flap, with the campfires burning warm and red in the night, and Chamberlain thought: you can grow to love it.

—Michael Shaara, *The Killer Angels*

In prison, I fell in love with my country. I had loved her before then, but like most young people, my affection was little more than a simple appreciation for the comforts and privileges most Americans enjoyed and took for granted. It wasn't until I had lost America for a time that I realized how much I loved her.

—Senator John McCain, *Faith of My Fathers*

It seems that more people are willing to admit that they love the Army and certainly that they love the United States. That is not quite as personal as saying a person loves soldiers, and one can still project the rough and tough image while loving the Army and the country.

The Army and this nation once again enjoy the respect and admiration of our citizens and the world after a string of successes and missions completed in the name of freedom and basic human rights. Grenada,

Panama, Operation Desert Storm, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and our current fight against terrorism in Afghanistan are examples of missions dedicated to restoring freedom and protecting people's basic human rights throughout the world. The successes were not easy to achieve, and it is not easy to maintain a successful organization; however, the Army must never lose the respect and admiration of its citizens and the world again. It is easier to love an army and a nation that stand up for others and defend human rights.

Senior leaders must nurture and encourage an organizational culture that instills values, competence, and dedication to victory in its soldiers. An organization's culture may be complex, elusive, and hard to discern, but it influences how people perceive that organization. It takes great care and vigilance to understand, assess, shape, and change culture to sustain core competencies and values to ensure an organization's success and vitality. Although the Army has a reputation for competence, values, and success, senior leaders must consider the long-term effects of a high operating tempo, force structure, and personnel policies to ensure they maintain an army that soldiers can love.

Most citizens will admit their love for America, despite its faults and mistakes, as witnessed by vigorous and overt expressions of patriotism following the attacks of 11 September 2001. These attacks remind Americans that they must not take freedom for granted. Every day is Independence Day, not just the 4th of July, and every day is a day of thanksgiving, not just one Thursday in November. It may be possible for leaders to be effective if they simply like their soldiers, like their units, like the Army, or like the country, but to do it right, leadership requires passion—leaders who love their soldiers, love the Army, and love this country. **MR**

NOTES

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